

Message Text

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72

ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 /074 R

DRAFTED BY EA/TB:VLTOMSETH:MAC

APPROVED BY EA:RSINGERSOLL

EA/TB:JBDEXTER

PM/SHS:RTGREY

PM/ISO:DPASSAGE (SUB)

EA/P:WMAGRUDER (SUB)

L/EA:EVERVILLE

OSD/ISA:COL INGRAM

OSD/PA:LTC BYRNE

OSD/GC:BFORMAN

H:ASCHEE (SUB)

L/PM:JMICHEL

S/PRS: MR KING (INFO)

----- 025535

O R 072112Z MAR 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

INFO USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 046104

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, TH, US

SUBJECT: PRESS VISIT TO USSAG HEADQUARTERS

REF: A. BANGKOK 3335 B. BANGKOK 3707

1. SECTION 29 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1973 DOES
NOT CONCERN ITSELF WITH THE RIGHT TO U.S. AUTHORITIES TO
REFUSE MEDIA ACCESS TO US MILITARY OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES
FOR REASONS OF U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY. IT THEREFORE WOULD
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SEEM THAT, IF SECURITY RATIONALE IS VALID, WE COULD REASON-

ABLY TURN DOWN FOISIE'S REQUEST TO VISIT USSAG WITHOUT RUNNING THE RISKS INHERENT IN A THAI REFUSAL TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR SUCH A VISIT. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS CLEAR FROM THE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF SECTION 29 THAT REFUSING FOISIE'S REQUEST ON GROUNDS OF NATIONAL SECURITY COULD, IF JUSTIFICATION IS NOT THOROUGHLY CONVINCING, HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS HERE SINCE THE INTENT OF CONGRESS SPECIFICALLY WAS TO INSURE THAT U.S. MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES HAVE REGULAR ACCESS TO U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES IN THAILAND. WE ARE CERTAIN THAT, WHEN CONGRESS LEARNS OF ANY REFUSAL, AS IT INEVITABLY MUST, SUCH DECISION WILL BE CRITICALLY SCRUTINIZED AS POSSIBLE ATTEMPT BY U.S. AUTHORITIES TO CIRCUMVENT THE LAW'S OBJECTIVE ON BEHALF OF THE THAI. THIS VERY LIKELY WOULD SEVERELY COMPOUND THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACE IN SECURING FAVORABLE LEGISLATION FOR FY 1975 PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THOSE FOR THAILAND. IT COULD

ALSO ENGENDER A PUBLICIZED CONTROVERSY HERE THAT MIGHT HAVE THE SAME ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES, FROM THE RTG VIEWPOINT, AS WOULD APPROVAL OF THE PRESS VISIT, I.E. DRAWING UN-FRIENDLY PUBLIC ATTENTION TO USSAG. WE AND RTG ARE CONSEQUENTLY CONFRONTED WITH A SERIOUS DILEMMA.

2. THEREFORE, PRIOR TO RESPONDING TO FOISIE'S LETTER, YOU SHOULD APPROACH THE RTG AT A HIGH LEVEL (INCLUDING, WE SUGGEST, THE FOREIGN MINISTER) TO EXPLAIN FULL DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM AND EXPLORE LIKELY RTG REACTION SHOULD WE FORWARD FOISIE'S REQUEST THROUGH THE ESTABLISHED CHANNEL TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. YOU SHOULD ARGUE IN STRONGEST TERMS THAT REFUSAL WOULD PRODUCE PROBLEMS FAR MORE SERIOUS THAN APPROVAL.

3. YOU SHOULD POINT OUT THAT A REFUSAL TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR THIS VISIT COULD RESULT NOT ONLY IN ADVERSE PUBLICITY BUT ALSO IN LEGISLATION EVEN MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN THE TERMS OF SECTION 29. THE FUTURE OF THE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR THAILAND WOULD BE DIRECTLY JEOPARDIZED BY SUCH A REFUSAL AND THAILAND'S PROSPECTS FOR FAVORABLE TREATMENT ON OTHER MATTERS COULD ALSO BE DIMINISHED. YOU SHOULD ALSO SUGGEST TO THE RTG THAT

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DENYING FOISIE ACCESS TO USSAG IS NOT LIKELY TO DETER HIM FROM WRITING HIS STORY AND THAT IT MIGHT THEREFORE BE WISER TO LET HIM DO IT IN A SATISFIED FRAME OF MIND. INDEED, A FACTUALLY ACCURATE PIECE PRESUMABLY WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO A SPECULATIVE ONE. MOREOVER, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT TURNING FOISIE DOWN WILL CUT OFF PRESS INTEREST IN USSAG; IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT SUCH ACTION WILL ONLY WHET THE APPETITE OF THE MEDIA AND ENCOURAGE IT TO SEEK

CONGRESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IN REDRESSING ITS GRIEVANCES ON THE ISSUE OF BASE ACCESS. IF RTG INSISTS THAT IT MUST DENY ACCESS, YOU SHOULD SEEK AS EXPLICIT A RATIONALE FOR THIS DECISION AS POSSIBLE.

4. IF THE RTG INDICATES THAT IT MIGHT BE WILLING TO APPROVE FOISIE'S REQUEST, YOU SHOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO HIS LETTER. IF IT IS CLEAR THAT THE RTG WOULD TURN HIM DOWN IF FORMALLY REQUESTED THROUGH THE MFA CHANNEL, YOU SHOULD DEFER RESPONSE TO HIM UNTIL YOU HAVE GIVEN US AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE RTG RATIONALE AND YOUR OWN RECOMMENDATION. OUR TENTATIVE VIEW DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH DOD WOULD BE THAT A RESPONSE ALONG LINES PROPOSED IN REF A PROBABLY WOULD PRODUCE THE SAME REACTION IN CONGRESS AS AN RTG REFUSAL TO GRANT FOISIE PERMISSION TO VISIT USSAG. IN THIS REGARD, THE PHRASE 'CONSISTENT WITH SECURITY' IN SECTION 29 OF FAA OF 1973 IS A REFERENCE TO

SECURITY OF HOST COUNTRY, NOT OF U.S.

5. SINCE THIS COULD BECOME A SERIOUS ISSUE, WE NEED FULLEST COORDINATION OF VIEWS BETWEEN MISSION AND WASHINGTON. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE LAW, MILITARY BASES, JOURNALISTS, VISITS, INFORMATION CONTROL, MILITARY POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE046104
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: VLTOMSETH:MAC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740360/aaaacdtz.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. BANGKOK 3335 B. BANGKOK 3707
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Aug-2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <14 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS VISIT TO USSAG HEADQUARTERS
TAGS: MASS, EAID, TH, US
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005